Photo: NISSIN FOODS HOLDINGS CO., LTD.

ANDO Momofuku (born 1910, passed away in 2007)

ANDO Momofuku, the Inventor of Instant Noodles

ANDO Momofuku, who invented the world's first instant noodles, *Chicken Ramen*, in 1958, dedicated his life to creating a new aspect of Japanese food culture. We spoke with ARAKAWA Tomohiro, from the Corporate Communications Division at NISSIN FOODS HOLDINGS, about the 96-year life journey of ANDO, dedicated to the invention and development of instant noodles.

(Text: KUROSAWA Akane)

"ANDO Momofuku was born in 1910. Japan faced a terrible food shortage after the end of the Second World War. The streets were filled with hungry people, and countless numbers collapsed and died from malnutrition. ANDO, who witnessed this horrifying scene, became keenly aware of the importance of food. He realized that in the absence of food, clothing and shelter are useless and there can be no art or culture," explains ARAKAWA.

"As ANDO was passing by a black market[1] area near Osaka Station one day, he happened to see people form a long line in the cold at a makeshift stall to wait for a bowl of ramen noodles. The sight reminded ANDO of how much Japanese people like noodles and at the same time filled him with conviction that the long line was a sign of enormous hidden demand. This experience became the catalyst for what would later be a groundbreaking invention. Around 10 years later, when ANDO was 47 years old, he recalled the sight of the ramen stall at the black market and decided to create 'Ramen that can be quickly prepared and eaten at home with only hot water.' In a shed he built in the backyard of his home, he conducted non-stop development alone for an entire year, without taking a single day of rest and sleeping only four hours a night on average."

The development process faced two significant challenges: "It must be capable of long-term storage" and "It needs to be quick and easy to prepare." However, both of these obstacles were unexpectedly overcome through a moment of inspiration.

"One day ANDO went into the kitchen when his wife was deep-frying tempura and discovered a hint that led to the production technology that became the basis of instant noodles: flash-frying. By frying noodles in hot oil, the moisture in them is forced out by the high-temperature oil, making them nearly completely dehydrated. This process made it possible to store the noodles at room temperature for up to six months. The reduction in moisture helped prevent the growth of bacteria that damages the noodles. Additionally, while invisible to the naked eye, he noticed that the hot water poured over the noodles was absorbed through countless tiny cavities formed during the

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Above: The world's first instant noodles, *Chicken Ramen*. The photo shows the original packaging.

Below: A faithful reproduction of ANDO Momofuku's Work Shed (CUPNOODLES MUSEUM YOKOHAMA)

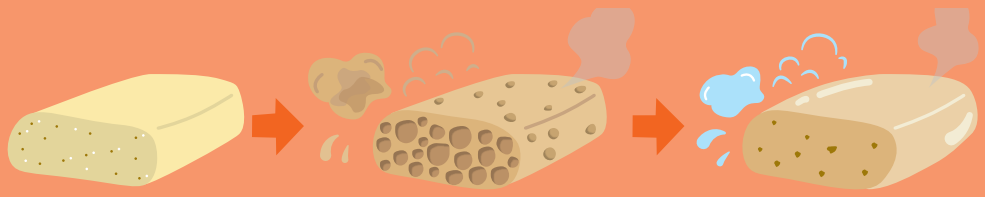

Image of the "flash-frying method." Left: steamed noodle. Middle: noodle after being fried in oil, with moisture removed, forming countless tiny cavities. Right: when boiled water is added, it is absorbed through the cavities, returning the noodles to their original state in a short time.

dehydration process, allowing water to penetrate throughout the noodles and restore them to their original softness. This method was patented and remains the fundamental technique for producing instant noodles to this day.

"In August 1958, *Chicken Ramen*, the world's first instant noodles, was launched. Since it was ready to eat in just two minutes after adding boiled water, *Chicken Ramen* was inconceivable under the conventional wisdom of the times, and was dubbed 'magic ramen,' becoming an immense hit in Japan.

"Even after inventing the first instant noodles, ANDO continued his research, further advancing the development of instant noodles that could be easily enjoyed anywhere.

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The world's first version of noodles in a cup, named *Cup Noodles*.

"ANDO wanted to spread instant noodles worldwide, and in 1966 set out on an inspection tour to Europe and the United States. During a visit with the buyers for a supermarket chain in the United States, he saw the managers in the office divide up a block of *Chicken Ramen* noodles, place the noodles in paper cups, add boiled water, and begin eating with forks. This made ANDO realize that unlike in Japan, there were neither *donburi*[2] bowls nor chopsticks available in the United States. He realized that differences in eating habits were the key to making instant noodles a global food. The experience gave him the hint that prompted development of a new product: noodles in a cup that can be eaten with a fork. The new product that resulted was the world's first version of noodles in a cup, named *Cup Noodles*, in 1971."

Photo: NISSIN FOODS HOLDINGS CO., LTD.

ANDO during his visit to Europe and the United States (back row, center).

Instant noodles, born in Japan, has crossed cultural barriers to become a delicious and convenient meal enjoyed worldwide, evolving into a global food staple[3] and firmly establishing itself overseas.

Museums[4] in Ikeda City, Osaka Prefecture, and the City of Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture, showcase the history of ANDO's invention of instant noodles and his lifelong dedication to food innovation until he passed away at 96. Visitors can explore displays on the inspirations behind his discoveries and inventions and even create their own unique *Cup Noodles*. A visit is highly recommended for anyone interested in instant noodles or a fan of ramen.

Right: An example of an exhibition and attraction at CUPNOODLES MUSEUM YOKOHAMA, where visitors can choose ingredients and soup types to create their own original *Cup Noodles*.

Below: CUPNOODLES MUSEUM OSAKA IKEDA, where the history of instant noodles invention is on display.

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1. Refers to markets in Japan where goods were sold without government control or regulation, particularly during postwar times of chaos.
2. A large, thick, and deep ceramic bowl traditionally used for serving food.
3. According to World Instant Noodles Association (WINA), 120.2 billion servings of instant noodles were sold in 2023, comprising approximately 93.3 billion packets and 26.9 billion cups.
4. CUPNOODLES MUSEUM YOKOHAMA is located in Shinko, Naka-ku, Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture, and CUPNOODLES MUSEUM OSAKA IKEDA is located in Masumi-cho, Ikeda city, Osaka Prefecture.